ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

TO THE

CHAILEY RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL,

FOR THE YEAR 1908.

REPORT.

Gentlemen,—I am glad to report that during the year 1908 good progress was made in improving the sanitary condition of your district, especially with regard to cowstalls, and I am pleased to state that no serious epidemic has occurred. The birth rate was 22.3 per 1,000 and the death rate 10.6 per 1,000.

The most noticeable PHYSICAL FEATURES of the district are the South Downs, which also contain the chief sources of its water supply, and the numerous woods and large expanses of common land. The soil and sub-soil varies considerably in different localities, the principal being sand, clay, and chalk. The chief occupations of the inhabitants are agricultural (especially as applied to the production of milk), fruit growing, poultry raising and brickmaking. The direct and rapid supply of fresh milk and fruit to the surrounding large towns must do much to improve the public health in them. The house accommodation is generally good, the average number of people per house being 5.1. Several cottages are in bad repair, especially in Ringmer. Twenty-two new houses have been occupied during the year, plans of all of which were passed by your Council. Many houses are still unduly shut in by trees and unable to benefit fully by the proper admission of light and air. Many, also, fail in cleanliness of their surroundings. From the variable geological formation of the Weald of Sussex, the nature and quantity of water likely to be found in any given locality when sinking a well is most uncertain. In some parts of the district good supplies are found in sandstone or chalk, and a few in hard limestone at greater depths. The chief risks of pollution arise from soakage of sewage into wells, from cesspools or from the ground surface, where pails and earth closets have to be constantly emptied on small areas near the wells. Fossil *débris* in some cases convey sufficient animal matter to render water unpotable, and the water in one new well contained such a large amount of gypsum as to render it quite unfit for use. Some water (especially from sandstone) has strong plumbo-solvent action and in several cases I have had the lead pipes removed and iron ones substituted; but with ordinary iron pipes the same water has the unfortunate property of rusting up the calibre or causing a deposit of iron in vessels in which it is stored for any length of time. I strongly advise the use of iron pipes with a lining of *white* enamel inside for use in this district. In any house supplied with soft well water conveyed by lead pipes, and especially where illnesses are prevalent with gouty, rheumatic or anæmic symptoms (apart from the usual definite nervous lesions of lead poisoning), I would recommend that the water should be tested for lead. The chief supplies of water are from wells of various depths, but a few more houses have been connected with public supplies during the year. I have examined 43 samples of water and six have been sent to an analyst in Brighton.

MILK SUPPLY.—The character and wholesomeness of the milk produced in the district has been very good. The greater part is sent to various towns and local steam dairies in the ordinary tin milk churns after being cooled. The risks of the milk being infected during transit by rail must be great, especially in windy weather, so that it is important the churns should be provided with dust-proof lids. At many farms the cooling of the milk is still carried out in too close proximity to the cowstalls and yards. Mr. Weller (your inspector) reports that all the cowstalls have been inspected by him and their conditions fully reported to the Council, and that the repairs, alterations and new buildings are having satisfactory attention. From my own observation I think the condition of the cowstalls has been considerably improved, but in very many cases more cleanliness, both with regard to the cows themselves and the stalls, is possible and necessary. The same remark applies to many yards near to cowstalls. Further regulations with respect to dairies, cowsheds and milkshops in the rural district of Chailey were adopted by you and came into force on 1st January, 1908. I trust that cowkeepers will do all they possibly can to help us to carry these regulations out, for the good of the public health and to the benefit of their business. With regard to tuberculous milk, I am informed by the best veterinary surgeons that very few cases of tuberculous udders are found in your district, but I would again strongly urge in *every* case of noticeable trouble in the udder, such as hardness, heat, tenderness, or if blood appears with the milk, that a veterinary surgeon should be called in. The recent report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the relations of human and animal tuberculosis appears to prove, beyond doubt, that the bovine type is identical with some forms of the human type; so it is obvious that milk from a cow's tuberculous udder should never be used for food, especially for children. It is yet undecided what is the danger, if any, attaching to the milk of tuberculous cows in which the udder shows no evidence of disease, but it is highly probable that the chief danger from these cases arises from the possibility of tubercle bacilli being introduced into milk by dust from the stall. It is found that the excreta of cows suffering from tuberculosis, other than that in the udder, contain large numbers of tubercle bacilli. It has also been proved that pigs fed upon tuberculous milk are liable to be infected. so that it is unwise to use it for this purpose. In my opinion if the public require a purer milk supply it must be prepared to pay a little more for it, to enable the farmer to devote more time and labour in producing it, and to have his cows periodically tested with the tuberculine test and the milk examined by experts, and also to make good his losses upon animals which are found to be unhealthy by these tests. It would be of great help to the district if some provision could be made to obtain a careful and expeditious examination of milk for tubercle bacilli when there is a doubt, at a small cost to the farmer himself.

OTHER FOODS.—There have been no carcases condemned for tuberculosis during the year and the shops where food is stored or exposed for sale have been well kept.

Some of the SLAUGHTER-HOUSES might be kept cleaner than they have sometimes been.

SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE.—During the year your Inspector has spent much time in superintending the working of the sewers, especially in

Ringmer and Ditchling, and the laying down of new ones at Asylum Corner, where 97 houses have been connected with the new sewer, thus removing nuisances that have given trouble for years. The greater part of the sewer at the Isolation Hospital has also been re-laid, under Mr. Weller's supervision.

THE SEWERS AND HOUSE DRAINS have been working satisfactorily, but improvements are needed at Cooksbridge and Barcombe, and I feel convinced that the proposed new sewer for Barcombe village will be a great benefit and an improvement upon the two present faulty ones.

POLLUTION OF RIVERS AND STREAMS.—There is some pollution, chiefly from the effluents of drains and yards, but I do not consider it of serious consequence at present.

EXCREMENT DISPOSAL.—I am glad to say that a larger number of houses are being connected with main sewers yearly. As I have before mentioned, the constant burying of sewerage on small areas is a danger to the water supply from wells in the neighbourhood, in addition to being insanitary in other ways. It is quite rare to find any earth or ashes provided for the so-called earth closets. The difficulty of approaching many houses would render the extensive use of any system like the "Bexley" very difficult and unsatisfactory.

THE SCHOOLS in the district have been especially well attended during the year, and only that at Wivelsfield has been closed (once for mumps and once for drainage work). I have to thank the Masters and School Attendance Officers for the prompt way in which they have notified me of cases of sickness among the scholars.

METHODS OF DEALING WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASES NOTIFICATION on the whole is well carried out, but in a few parts of the district is not, perhaps, as thorough as it should be.

ISOLATION.—The hospital accommodation is sufficient and very satisfactory, and is more appreciated by the public year by year. DISINFECTION of houses is carried out under the directions of your Inspector, and often bedding and clothing is taken to the hospital for disinfection when removing the patients.

METHODS OF CONTROL OF TUBERCULOSIS.—Up to the present time there has been no system of notification of cases of pulmonary tuberculosis. After deaths in private houses the rooms have generally been disinfected by your Inspector. There is no special accommodation provided for tuberculous cases in the Workhouse Infirmary. The regulations as to tuberculosis issued by the Local Government Board on 18th December, 1908, providing for the notification of phthisis much in the same way as for other contagious diseases, should help materially to lessen the spread of the disease; but without means for isolation little real good can be expected. In my opinion the very best chance of improvement or cure in these cases lies in treatment on the lines of "graduated labour" as founded and carried out by Dr. Paterson at the Brompton Hospital Sanatorium, Frimley, and if any building for the treatment of phthisis is ever contemplated in the district I would strongly recommend this system to have due consideration when choosing a site. I have made several "systematic inspections" with Mr. Weller during the year.

Miss Heale has again kindly supplied me with the record of the rainfall in Newick for the year:

	Inches.		Inches.
January	1·50	August	5·60
February	1·11	September	00·23
March	3·07	October	2·05
April	1·07	November	1·15
May	2·07	December	3·17
June	00·58		
July	3·22	Total	24·82

The average for the previous eight years being 26.56 inches.

On looking at the tabular statements (I.-V.) of sickness and mortality in the district during the year, enclosed with this report, it will be seen that Table I. shows the area of the district to be 49,975 acres and the estimated population 12,219; number of births 273, giving a birth rate of 22.3 per 1,000; the number of deaths 130, giving a nett death rate of 10.6 per 1,000 of the population. Both of these rates are an improvement upon the average for the past ten years. The total deaths in public institutions in the district were 94, 67 of these being of non-residents. The number of inhabited houses is 2,354 and the average number of persons per house, as I have before stated, is 5.1. Table II. gives the record of births and deaths in separate localities, and shows that in the Lewes Sub-Rural there were 78 births registered and 35 deaths in a population of 1,685; the Chailey Sub-Rural has a population of 10,534, with 195 births registered and 95 deaths. Table III. deals with cases of infectious disease notified during the year 1908 and shows that there were 20 cases of diphtheria, 15 being in Chailey Sub-Rural and five in Lewes Sub-Rural localities. Sixteen cases were taken into the Isolation Hospital. Six cases of erysipelas were notified and four of them received into hospital. Twenty-four cases of scarlet fever occurred—13 in Lewes Sub-Rural and 11 in Chailey Sub-Rural. Thirteen of these cases were admitted to hospital, and four cases were also admitted from the Uckfield district. One case of enteric fever occurred and was admitted to hospital.

In all 51 cases of infectious disease were notified. Table IV. gives a record of the causes of death at all ages, and it will be seen that two died from scarlet fever and two from diphtheria, five from epidemic influenza, 15 from tuberculosis in its various forms; 14 died from cancer, seven being over 65 years of age. Fifty-five deaths occurred over the age of 65, making 42.3 per cent. of the 130 total deaths.

Table V. deals with infantile mortality and shows that there were 21 deaths under one year old, 10 being under one week, five of these being from premature birth. There were 257 legitimate births and 16 illegitimate. There were no deaths of illegitimate children.

These tables show, I think, a satisfactory and improved condition of the district.

I am Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

FRANK GRAVELY,
Medical Officer of Health.